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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ROME 005788

SIPDIS

FROM AMEMBASSY ROME

GENEVA FOR RMA
NSC FOR JDWORKEN
USAID FOR DCHA AA, OFDA, FFP
STATE FOR AF/W, IO, PRM FOR THOME
USDA FOR FAS/EC/PDD TILLSWORTH AND
FAS/ICD FOR KRAMER, LEBLANC
USUN FOR MLUTZ
NAIROBI FOR REDSO AND OFDA/ARO
DAKAR FOR FFP NESTES AND KSTURR
USEU FOR PLERNER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [AORC](#) [PREF](#) [EAGR](#) [AORC](#) [PREF](#) [EAGR](#) [AORC](#) [PREF](#) [EU](#) [WFP](#) [UN](#) [EU](#) [EAID](#) [WFP](#) [UN](#) [EU](#) [EAID](#) [WFP](#) [UN](#)
SUBJECT: WFP'S WEST AFRICA REGIONAL AIRCRAFT EXPANDS
ITS ROUTING TO INCLUDE COTE D'IVOIRE BUT SOON MAY
HAVE TO SHUT DOWN OPERATIONS DUE TO FUNDING
SHORTFALLS

REFS: A) CONAKRY 1042 B) ROME 5454

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. THE U.N. WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP) HAS ISSUED A NEW
SPECIAL OPERATION (SO) FOR ITS WEST AFRICA PASSENGER
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AIRCRAFT SERVICE AND LAST WEEK ISSUED A DONOR'S ALERT
FOR THE SO. THE NEW SO REQUESTS 1.2 MILLION USD FOR
TWELVE MONTHS OF SERVICE. SINCE EARLY NOVEMBER, WFP
HAS EXPANDED THE FLIGHT SCHEDULE TO INCLUDE COTE
D'IVOIRE IN ADDITION TO GUINEA, SIERRA LEONE, AND
LIBERIA. IN THE LAST YEAR, A TOTAL OF 5,481
PASSENGERS FROM MORE THAN 152 ORGANIZATIONS USED THE
PLANE. IN ADDITION, 17 MEDICAL EVACUATIONS WERE
FLOWN. CURRENT FUNDING FOR THE SO WILL SUPPORT THE
AIR OPERATION ONLY THROUGH MID-DECEMBER. IF NO NEW
FUNDING IS PLEDGED WITHIN THE COMING DAYS, WFP WILL
BE FORCED TO SHUT DOWN THE OPERATION IN DECEMBER.
SEE FINAL PARA FOR RECOMMENDATION. END SUMMARY
I CANNOT GET RID OF THIS STUPID LINE. CAN YOU??

BACKGROUND

[1](#)2. AS REPORTED IN REF TEL A, IN OCTOBER 2001 WFP
LAUNCHED A SPECIAL OPERATION (SO) FOR PASSENGER
AIRCRAFT SERVICE TO GUINEA, SIERRA LEONE, AND LIBERIA
TO SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS. THE COST FOR THE
FIRST YEAR WAS BUDGETED AT 1.2 MILLION USD (10/07/01-
10/06/02). IN FISCAL YEAR 2002, STATE/PRM PROVIDED
400,000 USD AND USAID/DCHA/OFDA GAVE 225,000 USD TO
THE SO. THE IRISH AND SWISS ALSO CONTRIBUTED
\$108,070 AND \$134,230 RESPECTIVELY. THE FLIGHT
OPERATION IS MANAGED BY THE WFP/GUINEA COUNTRY OFFICE
AND IS BASED IN CONAKRY.

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[1](#)3. IN LATE SEPTEMBER, 2002, WFP ISSUED A FOLLOW-ON
SO TO BEGIN ON OCTOBER 7 FOR ANOTHER YEAR. THE
BUDGET REQUESTS 1.2 MILLION USD FOR THE SECOND YEAR.

NEW ROUTING

[1](#)4. UNTIL RECENTLY, THE WFP REGIONAL PLANE HAD BEEN
FLYING INTERNALLY TO SITES IN GUINEA FOUR DAYS A WEEK
AND ONCE A WEEK MADE A REGIONAL ROTATION TO LIBERIA,
SIERRA LEONE, AND GUINEA. ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5,
WFP ADDED FLIGHTS TO COTE D'IVOIRE, SERVICING ABIDJAN
AND YAMOUSSOUKRO, AND MAY SOON ADD BOUAKE, IF NEEDED.

[1](#)5. UNDER THE CURRENT SCHEDULE, THE PLANE FLIES ON
MONDAYS FROM CONAKRY TO KISSIDOUYOU AND N'ZEREKORE IN
THE FOREST REGION OF GUINEA. FROM N'ZEREKORE IT GOES
TO YAMOUSSOUKRO AND ABIDJAN, WHERE IT BEDS FOR THE
NIGHT. ON TUESDAYS IT FLIES THE SAME SCHEDULE IN

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00	SRPP-00
	EAP-00	EB-00	EUR-00	E-00	UTED-00	FDRE-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	NSAE-00	OES-00	OIC-02	OMB-01
	SSO-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PRM-00	SAS-00
	/004W						

-----1144A3 021422Z /38

P 021211Z DEC 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7128
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
NSC WASHDC
USDA FAS WASHDC 2447
AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMEMBASSY ABUJA
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USEU BRUSSELS 2977
JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J3/J4/J5
HQ USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE//ECJ4-ID-HA
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REVERSE: ABIDJAN TO YAMOUSSOUKRO TO N'ZEREKORE TO
KISSIDOUYOU AND RETURNS TO CONAKRY. WEDNESDAYS ARE
DEDICATED TO THE REGIONAL FLIGHT TO FREETOWN, KENEMA,
MONROVIA, AND CONAKRY. THURSDAY THE PLANE FLIES FROM
CONAKRY TO KISSIDOUYOU, N'ZEREKORE AND ABIDJAN.
FRIDAY IT BEGINS IN ABIDJAN AND GOES TO YAMOUSSOUKRO,
N'ZEREKORE, KISSIDOUYOU AND RETURNS TO CONAKRY FOR
THE WEEKEND.

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16. WFP/GUINEA DISTRIBUTES THE SCHEDULE WIDELY AND
PRIDES ITSELF IN MAINTAINING THE ANNOUNCED SCHEDULE.
BUT AWARE OF THE CHANGING NEEDS IN THE REGION, WFP IS
WILLING TO ADJUST THE SCHEDULE AS NEEDED TO BE
RESPONSIVE TO EMERGING NEEDS.

PASSENGER INFORMATION

17. IN THE LAST YEAR (OCTOBER 2001 TO OCTOBER 2002),
A TOTAL OF 5,481 PASSENGERS FROM MORE THAN 152
ORGANIZATIONS USED THE PLANE FOR A TOTAL OF 981
FLIGHT HOURS. 2,520 PASSENGERS WERE FROM
INTERNATIONAL NGOS AND 2,223 FROM U.N. AGENCIES,
INCLUDING 882 FROM UNHCR, 849 FROM WFP AND 195 FROM
UNICEF. IN JULY, THE PLANE TRANSPORTED 648
PASSENGERS: ITS HIGHEST NUMBER OF PASSENGERS IN ONE
MONTH. IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS, THE MONTHLY PASSENGER
AVERAGE WAS 572.

18. WFP OPERATES A LET-410 THAT IS REGISTERED IN
BULGARIA AND IS FLOWN BY BULGARIAN PILOTS. THE
AIRCRAFT HAS A 17-SEAT CAPACITY, HOWEVER FOR SAFETY
REASONS RELATED TO THE TEMPERATURE AND ATMOSPHERIC
CONDITIONS IN WEST AFRICA, WFP ALLOWS ONLY 12

PASSENGERS PER FLIGHT.

19. WFP'S SPECIAL OPERATION COVERS PASSENGER COSTS SO
THERE IS NO CHARGE TO PASSENGERS. WFP MAINTAINS
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STRICT PASSENGER APPROVAL PROCEDURES SO THAT ONLY
LEGITIMATE HUMANITARIAN-RELATED PERSONNEL AND
MISSIONS ARE ALLOWED TO USE THE PLANE.

110. THE PLANE IS ALSO USED ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS FOR
MEDICAL EVACUATIONS AND TO DELIVER FOOD OR NON-FOOD
ITEMS, AS IT DID IN EARLY OCTOBER TO COTE D'IVOIRE.
WITHOUT DISRUPTING ITS NORMAL SCHEDULE, WFP AIRLIFTED
FOUR METRIC TONS OF HIGH-PROTEIN BISCUITS FROM STOCKS
IN CONAKRY TO YAMOUSSOUKRO TO BE USED FOR THE COTE
D'IVOIRE CRISIS. IN THE LAST YEAR, IT HAS FLOWN 17
MEDICAL EVACUATIONS.

OTHER PLANES

111. AS REPORTED IN REF A, THE U.N. HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) OPERATES A REGIONAL AIRCRAFT
WITH A 10-SEAT CAPACITY. THE SCHEDULE IS COORDINATED
WITH WFP'S FLIGHT SCHEDULE, HOWEVER MANY USERS

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ACTION AF-00

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	COME-00	CTME-00	SRPP-00
	EAP-00	EB-00	EUR-00	E-00	UTED-00	FDRE-01	TEDE-00
	INR-00	IO-00	L-00	NSAE-00	OES-00	OIC-02	OMB-01
	SSO-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	PRM-00	SAS-00
	/004W						

-----1144BE 021423Z /38

P 021211Z DEC 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7129
INFO USMISSION GENEVA
NSC WASHDC
USDA FAS WASHDC 2448
AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMEMBASSY ABUJA
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USEU BRUSSELS 2978
JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J3/J4/J5
HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ4-ID-HA
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COMPLAIN THAT UNHCR'S PUBLISHED SCHEDULE IS
UNRELIABLE. IN ADDITION, UNHCR PERSONNEL ARE
PRIORITY PASSENGERS FOR THE PLANE, CONSEQUENTLY, NGO
AND OTHER U.N. AGENCY STAFF ARE OFTEN BUMPED FROM THE
FLIGHT. INTERESTINGLY, 882 UNHCR STAFF FLEW ON THE

WFP PLANE IN THE LAST YEAR--THE LARGEST NUMBER OF
STAFF FROM ANY ONE ORGANIZATION.

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12. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC) ALSO FLIES A REGIONAL AIRCRAFT. ICRC HAS TOLD WFP STAFF THAT THEY MAY USE IT IN EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES SUCH AS MEDICAL EVACUATION, BUT IT IS NOT AVAILABLE TO NGOS AND OTHER U.N. AGENCIES. THE ICRC PLANE (10-PASSENGER CAPACITY) IS BASED IN FREETOWN, AND FLIES TO THE FOREST REGION OF GUINEA TWICE A WEEK.

COSTS AND POSSIBLE SHUT-DOWN OF SERVICE

13. THE COSTS OF MAINTAINING AND FLYING THE WFP AIRCRAFT ARE 100,000 USD PER MONTH OR 1.2 MILLION USD FOR 12 MONTHS, AS WFP'S NEW FLIGHT SCHEDULE INCREASES THE FLIGHT HOURS TO 100 HOURS PER MONTH. IN THE LAST YEAR, WFP AVERAGED 80 FLIGHT HOURS PER MONTH OR APPROXIMATELY 75,000-80,000 USD PER MONTH, WHICH ALLOWED WFP TO STRETCH ITS FUNDING (OF APPROXIMATELY 867,300 USD) TO COVER THE 12 MONTHS.

14. BESIDES THE DONATIONS IT RECEIVED, WFP BORROWED DURING THE SUMMER SOME FUNDS FROM OTHER OPERATIONS IN ORDER TO COVER GAPS IN FUNDING AND CONTINUE THE SERVICE FOR A FEW MONTHS. WFP HAS NOW REACHED A POINT WHERE IT EITHER MUST RECEIVE ADDITIONAL DONATIONS OR PLEDGES BY DECEMBER 7 OR SHUT DOWN THE OPERATION.

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COMMENT

15. THE WFP REGIONAL AIRCRAFT SUPPLIES A VALUED SERVICE TO THE REGION'S HUMANITARIAN COMMUNITY. ITS DISCONTINUANCE WOULD SEVERELY HAMPER HUMANITARIAN OPERATIONS, AS HUMANITARIAN WORKERS AND DONORS WOULD BE FORCED TO DRIVE LONG DISTANCES. (THE DISTANCE FROM CONAKRY TO N'ZEREKORE IS 950 KILOMETERS AND TAKES 15 HOURS TO TRAVEL, ONE WAY, BY VEHICLE.)

16. AS PROBLEMS IN THE WEST AFRICA REGION CONTINUE TO GENERATE REFUGEES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS, THE USEFULNESS OF THE PLANE IN REACHING AND SERVICING THESE POPULATIONS IS CLEAR. U.S. MISSION/ROME SUGGESTS THAT STATE/PRM AND USAID/DCHA STRONGLY CONSIDER ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR THIS SO IN FY03.

17. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. HALL

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